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ABSTRACT

Results of a nationwide survey of school board members and superintendents indicate that although most districts approve of global education, other priorities are seen as more pressing. Responses were received by 215 school board presidents and 833 superintendents, for a total sample of 1,048. Participants were questioned about general educational trends and priorities before being questioned about global education specifically. The respondents preferred an emphasis on career, family, and consumer education. They believed that curriculum expansion should occur in vocational, industrial, economic, and basic education. Areas of least interest, and financial support included bilingual education, foreign language, field trips, and student exchange programs. On questions concerning global education specifically, 60% indicated that global education is an important issue and 80% suggested that it is an approach that school boards need to know more about. Impediments to global education were identified as concerns for the basics, higher priorities, funding, and lack of teacher preparation. (Author/KC)

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WHAT PRIORITY FOR "GLOBAL EDUCATION"

An NSBA survey of school board members and school superintendents.

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WHAT PRIORITY FOR "GLOBAL EDUCATION?"

An NSBA survey of school board members and school superintendents.

In a world of competing priorities, how do board members and superintendents regard the ideas that are spoken of as "global education?"

"Global education" is a phrase only recently come to the attention of educational practitioners and leaders. It prompts attention to whether students in American schools learn about the international dimensions of the material they study, and whether they understand the complex interrelationships of America to the rest of the world.

In the summer of 1979, NSBA was anticipating a global education project (which, in October, 1979, did occur) that would bring this concept to the attention of school board members in 1979-80. In August, with the aid of a grant from the Longview Foundation for Education in World Affairs, NSBA surveyed a representative sample of school board members and administrators to gain insight into their current thoughts about school programs, and their feelings, if any, about global education.

From the survey we learned that there is general approval of and some interest in global education, but that, in most districts, other priorities are seen as far more pressing. We learned, too, that to draw school leaders' attention to global education will require explicit definition. For example, it would help to have examples of global education programs on videotape. And, it will require that the relationship of global education to such high-priority concerns as reading and mathematics, vocational and career education, citizenship and economics education be clarified.

We mailed surveys, 2nd-class mail, to 2000 representative school board presidents and to 2000 representative superintendents, selected from a commercially available

nationwide mailing list. There were 215 usable responses from school board presidents--not an impressive response, to be sure--and 833 from superintendents.

The school board sample, despite its relatively small size, is a typical group in its demographic characteristics.

Male:	78%
Female:	22%
Under 40:	29%
40-49	42%
50+	29%
Less than 3 years' experience:	41%
3 or more years' experience:	59%
East:	25%
South:	16%
Midwest:	36%
West:	22%
Rural:	37%
Small town:	25%
Suburban:	23%
Urban:	14%
Appointed:	5%
Elected:	95%

The superintendent sample, too, contains no surprises.

Male:	96%
Female:	4% *
Under 40:	15%
40-49:	39%
50+	45%
East:	21%
South:	20%
Midwest:	40%
West:	18%
Rural:	44%
Small town:	27%
Suburban:	21%
Urban:	8%

* Actually, 93% of the 883 respondents were superintendents. The other 7% were "other," presumably central office administrators.

Both samples represent diverse district enrollments:

	BOARD MEMBERS	SUPERINTENDENTS
less than 500:	22%	19%
500-999:	7%	17%
1000-2999:	26%	26%
3000-4999:	7%	11%
5000-9999:	8%	10%
10,000-14,999:	11%	8%
15,000-24,999:	9%	4%
25,000+:	7%	5%

NSBA has observed an increased interest on the part of school boards about what students learn in schools. To check these observations, we asked two questions:

- o Compared to two years ago, how would you describe your school board's interest in the curriculum of your district? The board's interest is:

	BOARD MEMBERS	SUPERINTENDENTS
Far greater than 2 years ago	23%	18%
Somewhat greater than 2 years ago	40%	38%
About the same as 2 years ago	31%	39%
Somewhat less than 2 years ago	6%	3%
Much less than 2 years ago	1%	1%

- o Think about the most recent 3 meetings of your school board. In these meetings, how much time was given to discussion of curriculum matters?

	BOARD MEMBERS	SUPERINTENDENTS
None	5%	3%
Less than 10%	28%	32%
11-25%	44%	48%
26-50%	22%	16%
More than 50%	2%	2%

New emphasis and ideas for educational programs are forever available for school districts to consider and adopt. We anticipated that most respondents would regard global education as such an idea. Accordingly, the survey sought an expression of the relative appeal of global education among the current crop of new program ideas.

In recent years, a number of new topics have sought a place in the curriculum. From the following alphabetical list, indicate the one you think most deserving of increased attention in your district, and the one you think least deserving of attention in your district.

	MOST DESERVING Board/Supt.	LEAST DESERVING Board/Supt.
aeronautics/space education	5/3	22/28
career education	42/37	2/1
citizenship education	17/15	1/1
consumer education	7/11	1/-
drug education	2/5	1/1
environmental education	2/5	3/1
ethnicity/multi-cultural education	1/1	11/12
global/international education	3/2	4/3
law related/legal education	-/2	6/5
marine/oceanography education	-/1	23/28
metric education	2/3	4/3
nutrition education	2/2	2/-
outdoor/survival education	-/-	12/9
parenting education	7/6	1/2
sex education	3/3	3/3
other	4/4	-/1

Advocates of global education will see mixed blessings in this data. With few and trivial exceptions, boards and superintendents have similar views. (So, too, do respondents from different sections of the country, and from large and small districts.) "Citizenship" fares well, but "ethnicity/multi-cultural" does not. "Global/international" draws equally a small number of advocates and critics.

The list suggests that board members and superintendents, at this time, give emphasis to preparing students for work and personal life--career, parenting, consumer roles--rather than emphasizing new dimensions of societal interest such as space, ethnic and cultural issues, outdoor survival or environment.

A similar emphasis on personal life is evident in response to two additional questions which attempt to discern educational program priorities. Thinking that expansion of current programs is as likely as addition of new ideas, we asked:

Imagine that your district's budget were suddenly increased by 10% for the specific purpose of expanding your curriculum offerings. In your judgement, which three of the following areas are most likely candidates for expansion?

	BOARD MEMBERS	SUPERINTENDENTS
American history	4%	2%
Art education	12%	19%
Business education	26%	16%
Civics/Government	17%	12%
Economics education	26%	35%
Foreign languages	15%	14%
Geography	3%	4%
Industrial arts	23%	23%
Language arts	40%	37%
Mathematics	31%	25%
Physical education	4%	7%
Science	26%	19%
Vocational education	48%	50%
World studies	5%	9%
Other	10%	14%

Advocates of global education will again see mixed blessings in this data. The areas of greatest emphasis are vocational, industrial, economic and "basic"-- i.e., language and mathematics. "Civics/Government" and "Foreign language" get lesser though significant attention. "World studies" and "Geography" have few who regard them as priorities. Again, differences between boards and administrators are minor.

Thinking that prospects for the next generation are an important element of educational thinking, whether as an argument for new curricula or old, we sought to ascertain the issues which boards and administrators think are salient as they affect what students learn. We asked:

People often say that the school curriculum changes (or should) to help today's youngsters cope with tomorrow's problems. Accepting this idea for a moment, which five of the following do you think are the most important world and national problems which should be considered when thinking about school curriculum?

	BOARD MEMBERS	SUPERINTENDENTS
Alienation of youth	11%	11%
Crime/violence/terrorism	39%	35%
Declining morals	48%	44%
Dishonesty in govt. & industry	20%	19%
Disintegration of the family	39%	49%
Drugs	27%	21%
Energy shortages	54%	66%
Food/hunger	13%	8%
Future shock	5%	9%
Human rights	20%	20%
Inflation	47%	43%
International conflict	13%	14%
Mental illness	7%	11%
Nuclear energy and weapons	17%	14%
Pollution	19%	19%
Population explosion	8%	6%
Public apathy	31%	34%
Racism	13%	7%
Rapidly changing technology	31%	30%
Space exploration	3%	2%
Wealthy vs. poor nations	4%	5%
Women's rights	4%	2%
World health	4%	6%
Other	5%	2%

Self-evidently, international concerns, such as "world health" and "international conflict" rank quite low among the "important world and national problems which should be considered when thinking about school curriculum." In contrast, influences on personal life rank high: "disintegration of the family," "declining morals," "rapidly changing technology," "energy shortages" and "inflation." The global dimension of some of these concerns, however, may provide a key for prompting boards and superintendents to consider global education.

Still another view of board member and superintendent perspectives was sought by asking a prediction of what would happen to the interest and financial support for various areas of the school program.

Please gaze into the future, as best you can. Which of the following areas of the program, in your district, are likely to get greatly increased interest and financial support within the next five years? Which will get less interest and support? Which will stay about the same?

	ABOUT THE SAME Board/Supt.	GREATLY INCREASED Board/Supt.	LESS THAN NOW Board/Supt.
Adult education	59/57	26/30	7/ 6
American history	87/88	2/ 4	2/ 2
Art education	70/69	12/16	11/ 9
Basic skills	19/26	75/70	1/ 1
Bilingual programs	53/61	14/11	25/20
Business education	60/70	29/21	1/ 3
Career Education	37/42	54/50	3/ 3
Citizenship education	62/59	25/32	4/ 2
Community resource persons, use of	47/52	40/37	5/ 5
Competency testing	33/32	58/58	3/ 4
Driver training	72/70	5/ 5	13/16
Economic education	63/58	23/30	5/ 5
Field trips	46/48	5/ 4	42/42
Foreign languages	65/68	8/ 7	19/20
Geography	80/80	6/ 8	6/ 5
Health education	68/65	22/26	1/ 2
Industrial arts	65/68	22/19	4/ 5
Interscholastic athletics-boys	68/73	8/ 5	16/16
Interscholastic athletics-girls	54/60	25/22	13/12
Intramural athletics- boys	60/66	23/21	9/ 6
Intramural arhletics- girls	54/61	32/27	7/ 5
Language arts	56/54	34/40	2/ 1
Mathematics	58/61	34/33	1/ 1
Music	71/76	12/11	10/ 7
Psychology	69/76	6/ 3	15/13
Physical education	77/80	8/ 8	6/ 5
School publications	70/76	10/ 8	11/ 9
Science education	67/75	21/16	3/ 2
Student exchange programs	60/66	11/ 8	17/17
Vocational education	40/46	52/44	2/ 3
World history	81/84	7/ 5	3/ 3

The general patterns in this data are:

- o Boards and superintendents generally agree.
- o Boards and superintendents are more likely to predict increased interest and financial support than they are to predict less. Taken literally, it appears that educational leaders anticipate more interest and/or more support for schools in the next five years.
- o The areas least likely to change are: American history, geography, physical education, world history, and perhaps school publications, driver training, and music.
- o The areas most likely to see increased interest and financial support are: vocational education (as well as industrial, economic and career education), basic skills and competency testing (as well as some growth in language arts, mathematics and science), girls and intramural athletics, and to lesser degrees citizenship, health and use of community resource persons.
- o The areas most likely to see less interest and financial support are: bilingual education and foreign language, field trips and student exchange programs. There may be some reduction of interest in psychology, boys interscholastic sports, and driver training.

From the perspective of advocates for global education, these predictions from local school district leaders are not particularly encouraging. At the least, they suggest that interest in global education will be most likely if global education can be construed as integral to basic skills, student competency, and vocational concerns. A less-likely area of growth, citizenship education, offers some prospect. On the other hand, predictions for decline in language, field experience and student exchange are direct challenges to global concern--especially as these predictions for decline occur amidst a flurry of predictions for overall growth.

In addition to these several questions from which inferences about board and superintendent attitudes about global education might be drawn, we addressed four questions directly to respondents' thoughts about global education.

Introducing these questions, the questionnaire said:

One of several 'new' curriculum topics is 'global education.' Actually, the term is newer than the idea. The idea is that youngsters need to understand not only their local community, their state and their nation; they need to understand the place of their local world within the larger world economy and other cultures and nations. In this survey, we will use the term 'global education' but other frequently used terms are 'education for a global perspective,' 'international education,' 'world affairs education,' 'global studies,' and 'citizen education for cultural understanding.'

Definitions of this field emphasize such topics as world history, area studies (studying Asia, Africa, e.g.) ethnic studies, world geography, world literature, art, music and the humanities, international trade, foreign language, and studies of other cultures and peoples. Global education advocates want to assure that these topics are emphasized in school curricula. But also they urge that 'global education' be a major theme or idea that is touched upon in many courses and at many grade levels.

The following questions are intended to help NSBA decide what, if anything, it should communicate to the nation's school districts about 'global education.'

Then we asked:

As I understand global education, it is (check all that apply):

	BOARD MEMBERS	SUPERINTENDENTS
Something our school district does well.	11%	8%
Something our district does somewhat.	74%	82%
Something our district does not do at all.	7%	7%
An important idea.	61%	69%
A ridiculous idea.	3%	3%
A dangerous idea.	2%	1%
An overdue idea.	25%	25%
Something school boards should know much more about.	61%	62%
Something school boards should know a little bit about.	22%	20%
Something school boards need not know about.	2%	5%

These data, if examined separately from all that came before, give a rosy view of school board and superintendent interest in global education. It is "important" to more than 60% of both groups, and "overdue" to 25%. It is something boards should know more about, say 80% of both groups. It is also somewhat familiar, since most respondents were able to judge the degree to which

their district now attends to global education. Only a tiny proportion of both groups deemed global education either "dangerous" or "ridiculous."

These data say that boards know little but "should" know much more. (However, it is sobering to realize that 90% of the school board members who received this survey elected not to return it.) It is not clear whether respondents meant that school boards should know much more about what is happening already in their system, or whether they meant that school boards should know about global education in order to consider new activity.

Since NSBA was anticipating stepping up its activity in the area of global education, we sought respondents' assessment of what services might be helpful and what obstacles might need to be weighed. We asked:

Assume for purposes of this survey that your school system has decided to move ahead in the area of global education. Indicate whether each of the following types of assistance would be extremely useful, useful, of limited usefulness or of no use:

	EXTREMELY USEFUL Board/Supt.	USEFUL Board/Supt.	OF LIMITED USE Board/Supt.	OF NO USE Board/Supt.
A clear, written definition of global education.	48/48	38/41	6/ 6	2/ 1
Lists of objectives appropriate for various grade levels.	41/47	47/44	2/ 5	2/ 1
Model school board policy statements suitable for local discussion.	20/25	47/46	19/21	5/ 3
Descriptions of what other schools are doing or have developed in this area.	29/31	51/54	9/10	4/ 1
A brief film or videotape for public audiences about global education.	16/16	47/49	30/28	5/ 3
A list of possible sources of grant support for global education projects.	37/28	41/46	11/19	4/ 3

	EXTREMELY USEFUL Board/Supt.	USEFUL Board/Supt.	OF LIMITED USE Board/Supt.	OF NO USE Board/Supt.
Lists of consultants or organizations working in global education.	13/16	46/49	28/27	6/ 4
Lists of reputable student exchange programs operating in your area.	10/10	44/41	32/36	6/ 8
Lists of training opportunities for teachers & administrators.	20/23	62/56	8/15	2/ 2
Opportunities for board members to attend workshops about global education.	14/14	40/39	34/35	5/ 6
New money earmarked for global education from the federal government.	34/34	34/38	15/15	8/ 9

Of the eleven ideas suggested, all were "extremely useful" to at least 10% of respondents. All were either "extremely useful" or "useful" to more than 50% of respondents, while 6 of them were "useful" or better to 75% or more of respondents.

Of most interest to these local school district leaders were definitions and objectives by grade level. Of least (though still considerable) interest were workshops for school board members, film or videotape for public audiences, and lists of student exchange programs. Money, and descriptions of what other districts are doing, also ranked quite high.

Concerning problems or impediments that might be faced in emphasizing global education, we asked:

Assume, for purposes of this survey, that your school board were to decide to give greater emphasis in its curriculum to global education. No doubt, there would be some problems and impediments to implementing that decision. Please indicate whether each of the following would be a major problem, a minor problem, or not a problem.

	MAJOR PROBLEM Board/Supt.	PROBLEM Board/Supt.	MINOR PROBLEM Board/Supt.	NOT A PROBLEM Board/Supt.
The present concern with teaching basic skills	29/26	30/36	21/22	12/12
Students' concerns with themselves, not with other peoples and/or nations	12/13	38/37	29/35	13/11
Insufficient time available to cover the present curriculum	29/39	43/41	16/15	5/ 1
Too many other higher priorities to deal with already	32/34	42/46	14/15	5/ 3
The feeling that we're already doing enough or too much in this area	5/ 5	13/20	31/39	42/32
Community criticism of anything 'global'	5/ 5	14/15	36/41	37/34
Lack of adequate funding to purchase new materials	46/39	27/35	14/18	5/ 4
Not knowing how to evaluate such programs	10/10	41/38	23/35	18/13
Teachers' lack of preparation in this area	19/25	37/41	27/27	9/ 3
Lack of faculty enthusiasm administrative support, or community interest	15/17	32/40	30/30	13/ 8

Of the ten possible problems or impediments suggested, eight were regarded as "problem" or "major problem" by 50% or more of respondents. The two exceptions were designated "problem" or "major problem" by only 20% of respondents--the feeling that they are doing enough already, and concern over community criticism of anything 'global.'

As is clear throughout the responses to this survey, a problem for emphasis on "global education" is competition for time and priority. Concerns for the basics, insufficient time, other higher priorities and lack of funding were the problems most frequently cited. Superintendents, more often than board members, cite insufficient time and lack of teacher preparation; otherwise, as elsewhere on the survey, boards and superintendents have remarkably similar perceptions about these matters.

NSBA is particularly interested in applications of videotape to the provision of service to boards of education. Accordingly, we asked:

It is possible that NSBA will receive a grant to produce a videotape for school boards and other public audiences that would explain the concept of 'global education.' It would be approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ hour long. From this list of possible ways to explain global education in a videotape format, which do you find the most appealing? (Check as many as you like.)

	BOARD MEMBERS	SUPERINTENDENTS
A simulated school board debate about the pros-and-cons of adopting a local school board policy about global education	14%	23%
A simulated news program (like a <u>60 Minutes</u> report) which looks at some global education programs in a few school districts and interviews students, parents, teachers and experts	70%	69%
A simulated TV talk show where a provocative interviewer raises the hard questions to one or more experts	30%	25%
A debate between advocates and critics about global education	35%	33%
Statements by famous Americans citing the need and the schools' responsibility for global education	19%	22%
Illustrations of global education activities in several school districts	49%	59%
In-depth illustration of global education activities in a single school district	31%	30%

A straightforward illustrated lecture
by an authority in the field about
America's changing global role and
the schools' responsibility to teach
about it

BOARD MEMBERS

SUPERINTENDENTS

33%

34%

Other

5%

3%

All suggested formats were of interest to some persons. Two, both of which involve depiction of activities in several school districts, appealed to more than half of respondents.